

# HIGHLIGHTS

## SOUTHEAST ASIA DEVELOPMENT SYMPOSIUM 2022 SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA'S RECOVERY

16–17 March | Virtual Meeting



# SOUTHEAST ASIA DEVELOPMENT SYMPOSIUM 2022 FEATURED SPEAKERS



**MASATSUGU ASAKAWA**  
President,  
Asian Development Bank



**INDRANEE THURAI RAJAH**  
Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, Second Minister for Finance, and Second Minister for National Development, Singapore



**ING KANTHA PHAVI**  
Minister of Women's Affairs,  
Cambodia



**BERNADETTE ROMULO-PUYAT**  
Secretary, Department of Tourism, Philippines



**SANDIAGA SALAHUDDIN UNO**  
Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, Indonesia



**BENJAMIN E. DIODONO**  
Governor, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas



**YURIKO KOIKE**  
Governor, Tokyo



**RIDWAN KAMIL**  
Governor of West Java,  
Indonesia



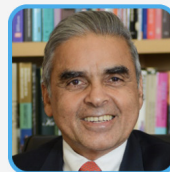
**ZAIRIL KHIR JOHARI**  
State Executive Councilor for Infrastructure and Transport, Penang State Government, Malaysia; State Assemblyman, Tanjung Bunga



**ARMIDA SALSIAH ALISJAHBANA**  
Under-Secretary-General, United Nations; Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific



**MAIMUNAH MOHD SHARIF**  
Executive Director, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)



**KISHORE MAHBUBANI**  
Distinguished Fellow, Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore



**SOFIA SPRECHMANN SINEIRO**  
Secretary General, CARE International



**HOOI LING TAN**  
Co-founder, Grab



**KATE BRANDT**  
Chief Sustainability Officer, Google



**AHMED M. SAEED**  
Vice-President (Operations 2) East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific, Asian Development Bank



**RAMESH SUBRAMANIAM**  
Director General, Southeast Asia Department, Asian Development Bank



**ALBERT F. PARK**  
Chief Economist and Director General, Economic Research and Regional Cooperation Department, Asian Development Bank



**SHAMINA SINGH**  
Executive Vice-President for Sustainability, Mastercard; Founder and President, Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth



**ANDREA DELLA MATTEA**  
President, Microsoft Asia Pacific



**WINFRIED F. WICKLEIN**  
Deputy Director General, Southeast Asia Department, Asian Development Bank



**F. CLEO KAWAWAKI**  
Head, Office of Public-Private Partnership, Asian Development Bank



**SUNGSUP RA**  
Chief Sector Officer, Sector Advisory Service Cluster, Sustainable Development and Climate Change Department, Asian Development Bank



**LIZ ORTIGUERA**  
CEO, Pacific Asia Travel Association



**LAUREN SORKIN**  
Executive Director, Resilient Cities Network



**CAECILIA CHU**  
Co-founder and CEO, YouTrip



**ILARIA CHAN**  
Chairperson, Tech for Good Institute



**ANH WARTEL**  
Deputy Director General, Clinical, Assessment, Regulatory, Evaluation, International Vaccine Institute



**JAMES VILLAFUERTE**  
Senior Economist, Southeast Asia Department, Asian Development Bank



**AKITO TANAKA**  
Senior Staff Writer and Chief Business News Correspondent, Nikkei Asia



**DAVID INGLES**  
Anchor, Bloomberg TV and Radio



**LISA OAKE**  
CNBC Catalyst

## Overview | 3rd Southeast Asia Development Symposium

A consensus to build back better and greener in the wake of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic emerged among experts and leaders who headlined the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) 3rd Southeast Asia Development Symposium (SEADS) on 16–17 March 2022.

During the 2-day symposium, the experts highlighted the need for structural reforms, inclusive and innovative solutions, and collaboration to sustain Southeast Asia's growth as countries confront emerging challenges while nursing their economies back to health.

Amidst global headwinds, experts agreed the region is well-positioned to address trade and supply chain disruptions, prolonged unemployment, emerging COVID-19 variants, higher inflation, and tighter interest rates. They also agreed that countries in the region should revive tourism in a more sustainable manner after the industry ground to a halt in the wake of the pandemic.

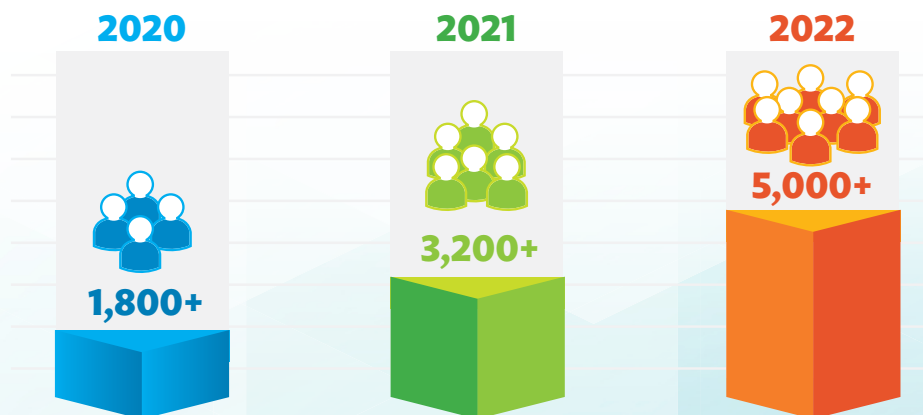
SEADS 2022, "Sustainable Solutions for Southeast Asia's Recovery," drew more than 5,000 participants, which included high-level government officials, private sector executives, representatives from the development sector and academe, and other stakeholders.

With three high-level plenary panels, eight sessions, and six workshops, SEADS 2022 featured 146 speakers, 60% of whom were women.

ADB organized SEADS to help crystallize thinking on relevant and critical issues in the region, and support countries in becoming prosperous, knowledge-based, and sustainable.

## SEADS BY THE NUMBERS

### PARTICIPANTS



# Day 1: Building Back Better | Opening Plenary

## Welcome Remarks:

**Ramesh Subramaniam**  
 Director General, Southeast Asia  
 Department, ADB

## Keynotes:

**Indranee Thurai Rajah**  
 Minister in the Prime Minister's Office,  
 Second Minister for Finance, and Second  
 Minister for National Development, Singapore

**Kate Brandt**  
 Chief Sustainability  
 Officer, Google

## Opening Keynote:

**Masatsugu Asakawa**  
 President, ADB

## Closing Keynote:

**Hooi Ling Tan**  
 Cofounder, Grab

Two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, Southeast Asia is finally showing signs of recovery.

But to build back better, the region needs to address a wide range of challenges, including global headwinds stemming from tighter interest rates, widespread unemployment, weak investment prospects, emerging variants, and higher inflation.

A new ADB report launched at SEADS, *Southeast Asia Rising from the Pandemic*, prescribed policy responses, including easing barriers to transport and trade, and boosting investments in education, training, health systems, social assistance, green infrastructure, and technology.

"Clear and focused efforts in these areas will ensure a more modern workforce, a safer and healthier population, greater protection for the most vulnerable, and stronger and more competitive businesses that are green and inclusive," said ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa in his keynote.



“ Many uncertainties remain, including the outbreak of conflicts that are causing great suffering and further setbacks to social and economic progress. But I firmly believe that our cooperation and creativity will allow us to emerge stronger than ever. ”

**Masatsugu Asakawa**  
 President, ADB



Noting global headwinds facing the region, Singapore Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, Second Minister for Finance, and Second Minister for National Development Indranee Thurai Rajah said greening the supply chain, infrastructure, and financing schemes are key to addressing the challenges.



“ Infrastructure is and will continue to be an important driver of growth for Southeast Asia. With more adverse weather patterns that threaten low-lying coasts it's critical for the region to build sustainable and resilient infrastructure. Failure to invest adequately in this area can result in dire economic environmental and social impact. ”

**Indranee Thurai Rajah**  
 Minister in the Prime Minister's  
 Office, Second Minister for  
 Finance, and Second Minister for  
 National Development, Singapore

Rajah considers supply chain disruptions among the most immediate challenges facing Southeast Asia, noting countries in the region need to collectively address disruptions in global supply chains and uphold an open stable and rules-based trading system. There is also a need to green the region's infrastructure to address climate risks, she said, warning failure to invest adequately in green infrastructure could result in dire economic environmental and social impact.







“ This is the decisive decade for action, from governments setting strong natural ambitions to companies embedding sustainability into every aspect of their business, to all of us committing to a more sustainable way of life. ”



**Kate Brandt**  
Chief Sustainability Officer, Google



“ We must also take steps to ensure that they [micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises] are equipped to harness the true potential of these digital tools. And one way of doing this is to invest in digital literacy and education. ”



**Hooi Ling Tan**  
Cofounder, Grab

Minister Rajah pressed the region to scale up sustainable finance to transit toward a greener low-carbon future, noting both governments and businesses need to tap green financing to meet their sustainability commitments.

Google Chief Sustainability Officer Kate Brandt also emphasized the need for more sustainability measures, noting the warming climate remains a critical challenge.

During her keynote, she announced Google's launch of a \$6-million sustainability seed fund to help nonprofits in Asia and the Pacific scale promising technologies tackling climate change.

Grab Cofounder Hooi Ling Tan noted that for governments to build back better, they must help micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) survive and thrive in the wake of the pandemic.

She stressed the need to arm small business owners with digital tools and skills through digital literacy and education.

Southeast Asia should also leverage fintech innovations to widen MSMEs' access to credit, the Grab executive said, noting 60% of small business owners are unable to get a bank loan to support business operations.

## SEADS BY THE NUMBERS

### COUNTRIES REPRESENTED



## Building Back Better through Inclusive Solutions | Plenary Panel

### Panelists:

**Ahmed M. Saeed**  
 Vice-President (Operations 2)  
 East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific,  
 ADB

**Sofia Sprechmann Sineiro**  
 Secretary General,  
 CARE International

**Benjamin E. Diokno**  
 Governor,  
 Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas

**Shamina Singh**  
 Executive Vice-President for Sustainability,  
 Mastercard; Founder and President,  
 Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth

**Moderator:** **Lisa Oake**  
 CNBC Catalyst



Southeast Asia's recovery is now taking shape, although growth remains fragile and uneven.

The panel discussed interventions needed to protect the region from the lingering impacts of the pandemic and stressed the importance of people-centered solutions and cross-sectoral partnerships.

One lesson from COVID-19 is how interconnected and interdependent societies are. Thus, harnessing the best assets of public and private institutions across sectors will be key to navigating the complex and intertwined challenges of the post-pandemic development landscape, as well as shaping a new normal where no one is left behind.

Noting how the pandemic has discriminated against vulnerable countries and vulnerable groups, ADB Vice-President (Operations 2) for East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Ahmed M. Saeed stressed the need to address inequalities made worse by the pandemic.



“ The reality is COVID-19 has been a disease that discriminates. It has hurt the vulnerable countries the most, [and] it has hurt the most vulnerable people in those countries. ”

**Ahmed M. Saeed**  
 Vice-President (Operations 2)  
 East Asia, Southeast Asia, and  
 the Pacific, ADB

CARE International Secretary General Sofia Sprechmann Sineiro noted the importance of placing women and girls at the heart of recovery programs.

Mastercard Executive Vice-President for Sustainability Shamina Singh agreed on the need to integrate gender considerations into recovery efforts. The pandemic has widened gender gaps and left many informal workers—who are predominantly women—exposed to risks of poverty due to income loss and lack of social safety nets, she said.

The Philippines meanwhile has seized the opportunity provided by COVID-19 to build its economic resilience by pushing with structural reforms, said Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Benjamin Diokno.



“ With our push for structural reforms, digitalization, and sustainability, we aim to see a Philippine economy that is stronger, more technologically savvy, more inclusive, and more sustainable than ever. ”

**Benjamin Diokno**  
 Governor,  
 Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas

Given the challenges facing the region in the wake of the pandemic, Saeed underscored the value of deepening partnerships between governments, the private sector, civil society organizations, and

development institutions to promote a balanced recovery. “No single institution—public or private sector—has the full array of capabilities and resources required to address these challenges.” As with COVID-19, multistakeholder cooperation is essential to confront new realities in the aftermath of the pandemic. “It takes a village, it takes everybody to be focused on a common purpose,” he added.



“ The opportunity for all of us here is to start to think about how we fold in the informality into the more formal sectors so that we all have an opportunity in this region to grow together inclusively. ”

**Shamina Singh**  
Executive Vice-President for Sustainability, Mastercard; Founder and President, Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth

Singh, who is also the founder and president of the Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth, cited how Mastercard collaborates with governments and multilateral institutions like ADB to bring tech-enabled customer-centric solutions, provide education and awareness, and create the enabling environment to strengthen customer protection and foster financial inclusion. Mastercard has also

partnered with civil society organizations like CARE International to help female entrepreneurs thrive in the digital economy.

The panel also emphasized the imperative to ensure a green recovery as the region deals with climate change, which is already causing widespread and increasingly irreversible disruptions.

Sineiro noted the opportunity that lies at the intersection of green jobs and gender equality, citing how investing in women could unlock \$160 trillion of global wealth.

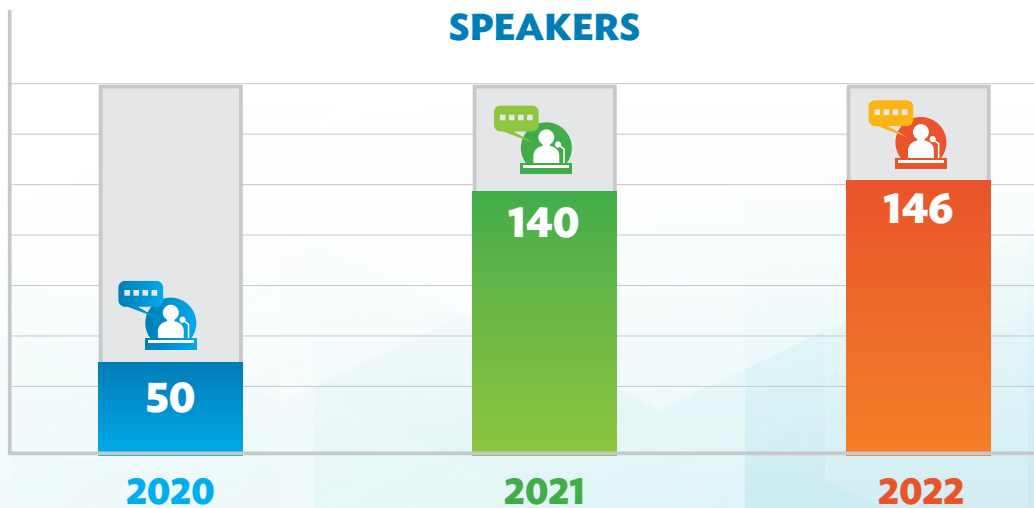


“ Globally, COVID-19 has set back progress on gender equality by a generation. It will now take an unacceptable 135.6 years to close the gender gap without accelerated action that before the pandemic, it stood at 90 years which also wasn't great, but now the reversal is just enormous. ”

**Sofia Sprechmann Sineiro**  
Secretary General, CARE International

In the Philippines, Diokno shared how the central bank supports climate transition through sustainable finance policies, harnessing the ability of banks to support green and climate-friendly investments.

## SEADS BY THE NUMBERS



# Report Launch: Southeast Asia Rising from the Pandemic

**Panelists:**

**Ramesh Subramaniam**  
 Director General, Southeast Asia  
 Department, ADB

**James P. Villafuerte**  
 Senior Economist,  
 Southeast Asia Department, ADB

**Moderator:**

**Johanna Camille Cayco**  
 Associate Communications Officer,  
 Department of Communications, ADB

**Fireside Chat:** **Ramesh Subramaniam**  
 Director General, Southeast Asia  
 Department, ADB

**Akane Okutsu**  
 Staff Writer, Nikkei Asia



Despite global headwinds, Southeast Asian countries are well-positioned to rebuild their economies, said ADB Southeast Asia Department Director General Ramesh Subramaniam and ADB Southeast Asia Department Senior Economist James P. Villafuerte as they launched a new report, *Southeast Asia Rising from the Pandemic*, during the symposium. According to the report, the pandemic pushed 4.7 million people in Southeast Asia into extreme poverty in 2021 while 9.3 million jobs disappeared, compared with a baseline no-COVID scenario.

good natural resources, and greater fiscal space are expected to recover faster. On the other hand, countries that rely heavily on tourism or the services sector, have a large informal sector, or those with narrow growth drivers or with low levels of economic diversification will continue to struggle.



“ We do believe countries in Southeast Asia particularly are well-positioned to go forward with the number of policy actions and other reforms to address these challenges. ”

**Ramesh Subramaniam**  
 Director General, Southeast  
 Asia Department, ADB

The report warned of global headwinds threatening to derail the region’s recovery, including widespread unemployment, weak investment prospects, tighter global interest rates, and geopolitical tensions.

But Subramaniam said there are also reasons for optimism about Southeast Asia’s prospects as vaccination rates pick up across the region, and as countries start to open up, which bodes well for tourism.

He said economies with widespread technology adoption, resilient merchandise exports, a base of



“ Despite these worries or concerns, there are so many reasons for optimism and one is really the concerted effort that we are seeing across all governments in the region to build stronger and to build a greener economy. ”

**James P. Villafuerte**  
 Senior Economist, Southeast Asia  
 Department, ADB

Villafuerte noted that the report proposes six policy interventions:

- Increase investments to upgrade and fortify national health systems;
- Strengthen social assistance programs to protect the poor and vulnerable;
- Boost labor market programs to raise the quality of education and training to prepare workers for the future;
- Support the modernization of small enterprises through technology adoption;
- Ease barriers to transport and trade and improve competitiveness to raise productivity; and
- Work in new areas, forge partnerships, and pool fund to cut carbon emission and build a green economy.

The report also encourages countries to enhance domestic revenue mobilization and international tax cooperation and to be more prudent in their spending amid rising levels of debt and deficits.



## ADB and Partner Sessions

### **Women Driving Sustainable Transformation in ASEAN | ADB and Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia**

Designing gender responsive policy and placing women leadership and contribution at the heart of the recovery efforts is needed to ensure Southeast Asia's recovery is inclusive. In this session, experts discussed innovative solutions and policies by female change-makers in the region.

### **Accelerating Climate Finance for Green Recovery | ADB**

Southeast Asia needs to design and develop more bankable projects in order to mobilize private capital to finance its climate ambitions. In this panel, speakers explored steps needed to rapidly mobilize climate finance in Southeast Asia and presented examples and initiatives on strengthening the enabling environment and policy frameworks for green and climate finance.

### **Enhancing ASEAN's Participation in the Global and Regional Value Chains | ADB**

Southeast Asian countries need to have predictable investment climate as well as trade and macro policies to ease investors' concerns amid global uncertainties disrupting global value chains. In this session, experts examined the risks and challenges facing the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' (ASEAN) participation in global value chains and global production networks.

### **Policies and Practices to Foster Sustainable Tourism after COVID-19 | ADB and Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA)**

The COVID-19 pandemic has reversed decades of robust tourism growth in Southeast Asia, causing widespread business closures and millions of job losses. Consequently, progress toward several Sustainable Development Goals has been derailed in tourism-dependent destinations. In this session, experts highlighted innovative examples on how to shift to a more sustainable tourism.

### **Building A More Sustainable and Resilient World with Innovation | Google**

Technology is key to accelerating Asia's progress toward a greener and more resilient future. In this session, panelists outlined some of the solutions and tools Google has developed and supported that are already making a difference in the fight against climate change, including a sustainability seed fund to support nonprofits in addressing sustainability challenges.

### **Digital Acceleration: Today's Opportunities for Tomorrow's Sustainability | ADB and Amazon Web Services**

COVID-19 has accelerated digitalization across many spheres of society, sectors, and markets. In this session, experts said governments should take advantage of the opportunities digital acceleration has opened up to ensure sustainable growth.

### **Unlocking Finance for the SDGs: Rising to the Challenge to Build Back Better | ADB**

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) presents a major financing challenge made even more daunting by the setback and fiscal stresses created by the pandemic. In this panel, experts focused on unlocking financing for the SDGs and explored how governments, private sector, and other partners in the region are innovating to rise to this challenge.

### **Knowledge Management and Innovation in Action: Transforming Policy Making for a Sustainable Southeast Asia | ADB**

Spawned by advancements in technologies in the last 2 decades, a plethora of information and content has led to the public sector struggling to make sense of all the information and knowledge needed for policy making. In this panel discussion, experts shared experiences on how knowledge management and futures thinking can be employed to plan better for development.

## Day 2: Revitalizing Tourism and Ensuring Cities' Sustainable Future | Plenary

### Welcoming Remarks:

**F. Cleo Kawawaki**  
 Head, Office of Public-Private Partnership, ADB

### Keynotes:

**Bernadette Romulo-Puyat**  
 Secretary of Tourism, Philippines

**Yuriko Koike**  
 Governor of Tokyo, Japan

**Maimunah Mohd Sharif**  
 Executive Director, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

**Andrea Della Mattea**  
 President, Microsoft Asia Pacific

While the COVID-19 pandemic has been tough on both Southeast Asia's tourism and cities, the crisis is also an opportunity to better future-proof cities, and countries, so they are more sustainable, inclusive, and less susceptible to similar shocks.

ADB Head of Office of Public-Private Partnership F. Cleo Kawawaki highlighted the challenges facing both the tourism industry and cities.



“ To find sustainable solutions for Southeast Asia's recovery, cities will need to be adequately resourced so that they can be the engines of sustainable development. ”



**Maimunah Mohd Sharif**

Executive Director, United Nations Human Settlements Programme

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) Executive Director Maimunah Mohd Sharif noted how the crisis has transformed many of the world's cities into pandemic hot spots, reversed many socio-economic achievements, and devastated labor markets, leading to adverse economic effects.

The UN-Habitat official said municipal governments should assess, enhance, and deploy their revenue streams to make their cities more sustainable.

She noted that UN-Habitat is ready to help cities prepare strategies which promote changes toward sustainable, resilient, climate-neutral and, equitable development.

Japan is one of the cities trying to reimagine itself amid the challenges posed by the pandemic and climate change. Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike said that since the crisis started, the city has been accelerating measures to ensure it does not return to life before COVID-19, but instead is poised “ to realize a city that is sustainable into the future.” This entails adopting measures based on three pillars: going green, deploying digital, and fostering inclusive development.

Apart from plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030 by shifting to clean energy like hydrogen power, Tokyo also wants to develop a sustainable city model with plans to create its digital twin by 2030. Under the plan, Tokyo will create the city's digital replica, which can then be used to visualize congestion and plan for the city's future.



“ From last year, our city under the banner of sustainable recovery has been accelerating measures so that we do not just return to life before COVID but are able to realize a city that is sustainable into the future. ”



**Yuriko Koike**

Governor of Tokyo, Japan

To be more inclusive, Tokyo has launched a network for female government and business leaders and plans to require organizations to increase the participation of women in decision making. The city government has also initiated plans to promote understanding of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex community.

The Philippines is also looking to the future when it comes to its tourism sector. Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat said the government is drawing up a 6-year tourism development plan to revive the sector and ensure the industry is more resilient against future crises.



“ The new plan must inspire a visitor experience that is richer, deeper, and more authentic while at the same time, more competitive and more Filipino. ”



**Bernadette Romulo-Puyat**  
Secretary of Tourism, Philippines

Puyat said one of the Department of Tourism’s flagship programs is to rebuild tourism to be more inclusive and resilient as the department works with ADB to help communities transform toward resilient, inclusive, and sustainable tourism. This entails helping micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises in the sector widen their reach through online marketing, expanding sustainable consumption and production campaigns, raising workers’ skills, and improving the quality of their products. The plan also entails increasing the participation of women and marginalized groups in tourism development, promoting barrier-free tourism, and engaging local communities, including indigenous peoples’ groups, in tourism development, especially in products such as slow travel and slow food.

For Microsoft Asia Pacific President Andrea Della Mattea, future-proofing the region means skilling workers for the digital world. She said countries would need disruptors, visionaries, and futurists to remain at the forefront of global transformation. Governments and industries need to ensure access to education training and technology, she said, citing that 65% of primary school children today will ultimately perform jobs that have not even been invented yet.



“ Perhaps the biggest contribution that everyone can make for long-term societal improvement is developing skills and talent because it’s people who drive digital transformation and skilling [that] will be the currency for the post-pandemic world. ”

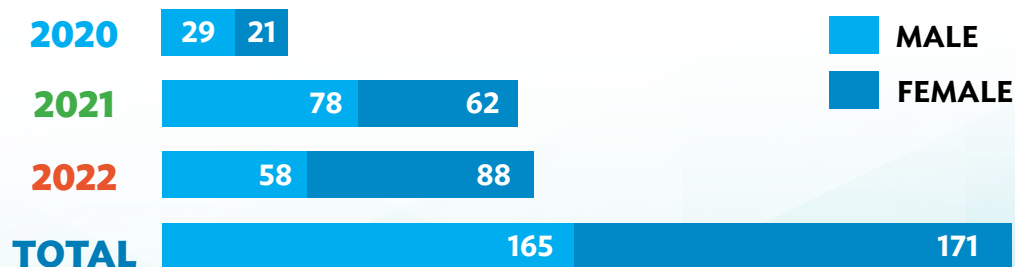


**Andrea Della Mattea**  
President, Microsoft Asia Pacific

Microsoft has launched digital skilling initiatives, working with customers like Grab and other partners to bridge the digital divide for drivers and their families. It also committed to skill one million people in Malaysia and 24 million in Indonesia. Together with its partners, Microsoft also strives to improve the employability of people with disabilities and address the gender gap in cloud, artificial intelligence, and digital technologies through various programs.

## SEADS BY THE NUMBERS

### GENDER REPRESENTATION AMONG SPEAKERS



**60%** The percentage of women speakers featured at SEADS 2022

## Driving an Inclusive Tourism Recovery in Southeast Asia | Plenary Panel

**Panelists:**

**Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno**  
Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, Indonesia

**Caecilia Chu**  
Cofounder and CEO, YouTrip

**Liz Ortiguera**  
CEO, Pacific Asia Travel Association

**Winfried Wicklein**  
Deputy Director General, Southeast Asia Department, ADB

**Moderator:** **David Ingles**  
Anchor, Bloomberg TV and Radio



With the pandemic plunging Southeast Asia's travel industry into turmoil as arrivals fell 82% in 2020, there is a growing consensus to address structural issues that have plagued the sector over the years, and build it back greener.

ADB Southeast Asia Department Deputy Director General Winfried Wicklein said the pandemic has provided an opportunity for the sector to build back better in an environmentally sustainable fashion. He noted the need to sit down with governments and help them strengthen the regulatory framework that will address policy gaps.



“ I think COVID-19 in some ways will be an opportunity also, as bad as it has been, to recover and to build back better in an environmentally sustainable fashion so we can address some of the structural issues that we've always wanted to address and just basically start from new—the right way. ”

**Winfried Wicklein**  
Deputy Director General, Southeast Asia Department, ADB

Indonesia is already making the shift toward sustainable tourism. Indonesia Tourism and Creative Economy Minister Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno said his country is moving away from quantity and is instead focusing on quality and sustainability.

As part of the shift, Indonesia is bolstering efforts to promote ecotourism and sports tourism as well as its natural attractions and culture. It is also pushing community-based tourism to empower 3,000 villages across the country and promote creative economy products like local food and traditional keepsakes.



“ We're moving away from quantity. We're focusing on quality and sustainability. ”

**Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno**  
Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, Indonesia

Indonesia is also giving travelers the option to offset their carbon footprint from their flights through activities like mangrove planting and waste management. Like other countries in the region, Indonesia is also targeting longer-staying tourists, who tend to spend more on locally produced goods and services, which have positive economic knock-on effects. Having longer-staying visitors has the added bonus of shortening supply chains and reducing negative environmental externalities—two critical factors for building destination resilience and sustainability.

Liz Ortiguera, CEO of the Pacific Asia Travel Association, said the industry needs to cater to more conscientious travelers. These new type of tourists—the intelligent luxury traveler—are more responsible and look beyond just posting Instagram photos, she said.





“ It’s not just doing an Instagram tour to take a photo in a much traveled location just to get a very superficial introduction. It’s intelligent luxury and that means wellness for yourself, for the community, and also for the environment. ”

**Liz Ortiguera**  
CEO, Pacific Asia Travel Association

She said it will be up to governments on how to create the right environment that would support the sustainable form of travel that would bring funds back into the community and support small businesses to be more sustainable for the local culture and the local economy.

Technology also has a role to play in reviving the sector. Caecilia Chu, cofounder and CEO of digital travel wallet YouTrip, said small businesses in the tourism industry should tap digital tools to unlock growth opportunities. For instance, they could put up a digital storefront or advertise on global online platforms to widen their reach. Adopting digital payment systems can also help them, as it can reduce the time and cost spent on transactions.



“ By digitalizing more of the businesses in the region, I think it would certainly help reduce the transaction cost and time and really help everyone do a bit more business. ”

**Caecilia Chu**  
Cofounder and CEO, YouTrip

Greening tourism though will have a cost, said Wicklein, noting countries would need to attract investments and use innovative financing approaches at a time when state coffers are already strained as countries press with efforts to revive their economies in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

He cited ADB’s newly launched Southeast Asia Sustainable Tourism Hub among resources countries may tap. He said the hub can help develop and finance innovative tourism projects, promote public-private partnership tourism projects, build tourism destination management capacity, and support some of the technologies that can bolster the industry.

## ADB Launches Southeast Asia Sustainable Tourism Hub

The pandemic has been particularly hard on Southeast Asia’s tourism industry, as the sharp drop in tourist arrivals forced many travel businesses to close shop and millions to lose jobs.

In December last year, ADB established the Southeast Asia Sustainable Tourism Facility to accelerate the sector’s recovery from the pandemic, boost inclusive, sustainable development in travel, and help local tourism entrepreneurs, especially women and youth, adopt digital platforms to grow their businesses. This led to the launch of the Southeast Asia Sustainable Tourism Hub during SEADS 2022.

The tourism hub will help countries identify and prepare environmentally sustainable tourism projects and catalyze private financing to support them. It will help businesses better operate tourism facilities and deliver digital tourism services. The facility will also help policy makers design visa, online short-term rental, and other policies to attract longer-staying, higher-spending visitors and remote workers, allow more small entrepreneurs to legitimately operate accommodation services, and boost tourism tax revenues.

Visit Southeast Asia Sustainable Tourism Hub



## The Future of Sustainable Cities | Plenary Panel

### Panelists:

**Zairil Khir Johari**  
 State Executive Councilor for Infrastructure and Transport, Penang State Government; State Assemblyman, Tanjung Bunga, Malaysia

**Ilaria Chan**  
 Chairperson, Tech for Good Institute

**Ridwan Kamil**  
 Governor, West Java, Indonesia

**Ramesh Subramaniam**  
 Director General, Southeast Asia Department, ADB

**Moderator:** **Lauren Sorkin**  
 Executive Director, Resilient Cities Network



With half of the population of Southeast Asia living in cities, governments are challenged to provide adequate and sustainable infrastructure and services to meet the increasing pace of urbanization and worsening risks from climate change.



“It’s always clear to me, the number one issue is always about population. This issue of population relates to everything that we are discussing today because population creates demand, fighting over resources, fighting over future jobs, fighting for clean water, fighting for free education, and so on.”

**Ridwan Kamil**  
 Governor, West Java, Indonesia

West Java Governor Ridwan Kamil said the issue of building resilient cities boils down to population as it has implications on available resources, jobs, clean water, free education, and other essential services. He said the key to dealing with disruptions like COVID-19 for instance, is for governments to be proactive and not rely on assistance. Governments also need to be transparent to avoid risks of unrest and to base their decisions on data.

Collaboration is also key to dealing with disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic, he said, citing partnerships with the military and police in delivering vaccines in both rural and urban areas.

He also stressed the importance of using technology in making cities more resilient. He cited how

West Java deployed a mobile application to distribute medicine to citizens during the pandemic.

Similarly, Penang in Malaysia is striving for resilience to make the state more livable for its citizens. Realizing the power of technology to transform, the state enhanced its digital infrastructure, said Penang State Government Executive Councilor for Infrastructure and Transport Zairil Khir Johari, noting download speeds now average 35 megabits per second versus 20 megabits per second in 2018.

In 2020, the state started an agency called Digital Penang to spearhead the digitalization of government services in the wake of the pandemic. During the lockdowns, the state government even hired young people and those who lost jobs due to the pandemic and turned them into “an army of digital promoters” who taught small and medium-sized enterprise owners and hawkers how to go digital and use online platforms to advertise their products.



“What we realized today is that a lot of big companies, a lot of corporations, first thing they look for is ESG [environmental, social, and governance]. It’s no longer about cheap labor or cheap resources, electricity, and so on. It’s really about ESG requirements—so if we’re able to fulfill the needs of these investors, that’s where we’ll be able to create high-income jobs and then once we have jobs, everything else comes along.”

**Zairil Khir Johari**  
 State Executive Councilor for Infrastructure and Transport, Penang State Government; State Assemblyman, Tanjung Bunga, Malaysia

Penang is also preparing for the worsening impacts of climate change, said Zairil. The local government has adopted the Penang 2030 Agenda, which outlined measures to improve the state's resilience against climate change. It also formed a task force to better prepare Penang's cities for the warming climate.

He said Penang is reclaiming three new islands, not just to add real estate and to allow the local government to raise funds for future infrastructure developments, but also as a climate adaptation strategy. The new islands would be built 3 meters above sea level to guard against rising sea levels, high tides, and storm surges.

The islands will also be fully compliant with environment, social, and governance benchmarks to entice big companies to invest. The first of the three islands will serve as a job center so it is being designed as a green technology park to attract more advanced investments.

Tech for Good Institute Chairperson Ilaria Chan also highlighted the role of technology in making cities resilient. She noted how technology can empower people while providing inclusive and equitable opportunities in a scalable way.



“Technology really can provide inclusive and equitable opportunities in a scalable way that doesn't discriminate, hopefully.”

**Ilaria Chan**  
Chairperson, Tech for Good Institute

Financial services technology, for instance, can boost inclusion and offers a huge opportunity in Southeast Asia, with many still unbanked or underbanked, she said. Fintech can allow providers to offer micro loans or micro insurance to the unbanked.

ADB Southeast Asia Department Director General Ramesh Subramaniam stressed the importance of collaboration and funding in helping cities become more livable. He said raising funding cannot be done by the public sector or by institutions like ADB alone. “You need to bring the whole ecosystem of players together,” he said.



“There is a much stronger, much clearer understanding and awareness that cleaner and greener cities are our future. This matters for our children, our children's children, and the future.”

**Ramesh Subramaniam**  
Director General, Southeast Asia Department, ADB

He cited ADB's collaboration with other stakeholders to provide financing for sustainable infrastructure projects, including a partnership with HSBC, Temasek, and Clifford Capital Holdings and a global alliance that pledged \$665 million toward a platform that aims to mobilize an additional \$7 billion for low-carbon and climate-resilient infrastructure projects in Southeast Asia.

## COVID-19 Vaccine Development and Challenges Update



Two years after COVID-19 hit, countries continue to grapple with the crisis. International Vaccine Institute Clinical, Assessment, Regulatory, Evaluation Unit Deputy Director General Anh Wartel warned countries should brace for more pandemics as she outlined progress on vaccine development and the challenges facing countries.

Cautioning countries not to repeat mistakes they made in dealing with the COVID-19 outbreak, she urged countries to continue surveillance efforts, boost vaccine research and development and manufacturing capability, and strengthen regulatory environment and health systems.

ADB Sustainable Development and Climate Change Department Chief Sector Officer Sungsup Ra noted that more than 2 years since the pandemic hit, vaccine rollout remained a priority for countries in Southeast Asia. He also detailed ADB's work in helping developing member countries across the region and Asia and the Pacific cope with the pandemic, by supporting countries in procuring and deploying vaccines, among other initiatives.

## Deep-Dive Workshops



### **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership: A New Paradigm in Asia's Trading Architecture | ADB**

As Asia embarks on the path of economic recovery, it gets a boost in regional cooperation as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement took effect on 1 January 2022. In this session, experts looked at the finer points of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership to inform policy makers and the business community on what to expect from its implementation.



### **Build to Last—Shaping MSMEs' Growth in the Digital Age | Tech for Good Institute**

With micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in Southeast Asia contributing about 40% on average to each country's gross domestic product, governments need to ensure these small businesses have access to credit and the capacity to deploy technology and take advantage of digital solutions and services, said panelists.



### **Enabling Empowered Women for Asia's Sustainable Recovery | World Women Tourism**

In this session, women leaders offered perspectives on the role empowered women can play in the region's recovery. They discussed actionable strategies to elevate the social economic trajectory of women in Asia and the need to shift mindset from empowering women to enabling empowered women to accelerate the work countries are doing to ensure equality and greater opportunities for women.



### **Destination Success: 7 Tools for Tourism Resilience & Sustainability | Pacific Asia Travel Association**

This session from the Pacific Asia Travel Association explored seven tools to help destinations, tourism businesses, and communities not only to recover from COVID-19 but also to be "future-proof."



### **"Come Play in ADB's Digital Sandbox" | ADB (Invitation Only)**

The pandemic has created conditions that necessitated the adoption of new digital technologies, creation of new business models, and adaptability to new ways of operating by businesses and governments alike. In this session, experts discussed the role of digital technology in furthering financial access, the importance of digital literacy, and the role of digital technology in infrastructure development.



### **Youth in Action: Driving Solutions for Sustainable Tourism | ADB Youth for Asia (Invitation Only)**

The pandemic has had an enormous impact throughout Southeast Asia, especially for young people. This panel explored innovative youth-led solutions to promote sustainable tourism, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also looked at opportunities in meaningfully engaging the youth in sustainable tourism.



# Inaugural Southeast Asia Policy Roundtable for ADB Developing Member Country Government Counterparts | ADB (Invitation Only)

## Keynote Speakers:

**Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana**  
 Under-Secretary-General,  
 United Nations; Executive Secretary,  
 United Nations Economic and Social  
 Commission for Asia and the Pacific

**Kishore Mahbubani**  
 Distinguished Fellow, Asia Research  
 Institute, National University of Singapore

For years, Southeast Asia has been a key player in global and regional trade, positioning itself as an important strategic partner of major economies such as the United States and People's Republic of China. Before the pandemic, Southeast Asia's growth trajectory has been on the rise, with the ASEAN economy projected to be the fourth largest by 2030, said National University of Singapore Distinguished Fellow Kishore Mahbubani.

She said governments could no longer continue to take short-term measures, but must be better prepared and invest for the future. To regain momentum on advancing the SDGs, she outlined critical interventions that can rebuild economies in ways that make them more resilient, socially inclusive, and ecologically sustainable.



“ It’s geopolitics that has a tremendous impact on trade flows. And it’s geopolitics that has changed the whole economic landscape of this region. ”

**Kishore Mahbubani**  
 Distinguished Fellow, Asia Research Institute,  
 National University of Singapore



“ This roundtable discussion is very timely given that we’re entering a phase where governments could no longer continue to take short-term measures, but must be better prepared and invest for the future. ”

**Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana**  
 Under-Secretary-General, United Nations;  
 Executive Secretary, United Nations  
 Economic and Social Commission for Asia  
 and the Pacific

However, the Russian invasion of Ukraine may jeopardize the region's gains and its post-pandemic recovery efforts, as the geopolitical tensions exacerbate trade disruptions and increasingly put pressure on countries and companies to reassess their supply chains, he said.

Senior government officials from Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Philippines, and Viet Nam shared policies and solutions to address the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the structural reforms to steer growth in a sustainable and inclusive direction.

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Executive Secretary Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, meanwhile, warned the overlapping crises facing the region may dim its prospects of meeting many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) targets by 2030.

Delegates and senior ADB officials also exchanged insights on the economic implications of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and possible measures to counter the threats from the conflict.

## About the Southeast Asia Development Symposium

The Southeast Asia Development Solutions (SEADS) is a knowledge and innovation platform under the Asian Development Bank (ADB). In tandem with its partner program, the Southeast Asia Development Symposium, SEADS aims to help crystallize thinking on relevant and critical issues in the region, and support countries in becoming prosperous, knowledge-based, and sustainable.

## About the Asian Development Bank

ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members — 49 from the region. Its main instruments for helping its developing member countries are policy dialogue, loans, equity investments, guarantees, grants, and technical assistance.

Visit the SEADS website, follow us on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube, and subscribe to our newsletter to get the latest updates on SEADS 2023.



Note:  
In this publication, “\$” refers to United States dollars



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